



American Federation of Television and Radio Artists

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Branch Of The Associated Actors and Artistes of America
AFL-CIO

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Representative John Conyers, Jr.
426 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Conyers:

AFTRA is part of the AFL-CIO and would like to reiterate our support for the Legislative Alert it sent out yesterday regarding HR 5469. We are a national labor organization representing over 80,000 performers and newsmen that are employed in the news, entertainment, advertising and sound recording industries. AFTRA's membership includes vocalists on sound recordings, both the royalty artists and background singers.

HR 5469 would place a 6 month exemption on payments due to our members. The Digital Performance Right in Sound Recordings Act of 1995, as clarified in 1998, requires the payment of license fees when sound recordings are digitally transmitted on the internet. Recording artists receive one-half of the license fees paid under the law (the copyright owner receives one half of the license fees, the featured performer receives 45% and the background vocalists and musicians receive 5%).

Webcasters have known about their payment obligation since 1998 but have continued to build businesses based upon our members' creative works without any payment while a rate was set. Artists must finally receive payment for use of their works, rather than being forced to continue to subsidize these businesses.

Most recording artists struggle to make a living creating the art that we enjoy. Artists want webcasters to thrive as music on the web is more varied than music available on the radio, and the payment of royalties for the use of music on the web will help to ensure that niche artists can continue to create and add richness and variety to US culture. We urge you to vote against HR 5469 and against further delay in payment of fair royalties to recording artists.

Sincerely,

Greg Hessinger